



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

National Marine Fisheries Service Decides Not to Issue Exempted Fishing Permit for Pelagic Longline Fishing Inside Closed Areas at this Time

The National Marine Fisheries Service is not issuing, at this time, an exempted fishing permit (EFP) to collect data on the performance of circle hooks with regard to target catch and bycatch rates, among other variables, associated with pelagic longline (PLL) fishing activities inside the existing Charleston Bump and Florida East Coast PLL closed areas. In February 2007, NMFS received an application from the Blue Water Fishermen's Association requesting exemptions from certain regulations applicable to the harvest and landing of Atlantic HMS in order to collect data on the performance of mandatory circle hooks with regard to target catch and bycatch rates, hooking location, and mortality of fish at haul back. The proposal included data collection in the existing Charleston Bump and Florida East Coast pelagic longline closed areas. After considering public comment received, as requested in the Federal Register (March 13, 2007 (72 FR 11327); April 11, 2007 (72 FR 18208; and May, 7, 2007 (72 FR 25748)), and further internal deliberations, the Agency has decided not to issue an EFP for the application as submitted.

NMFS supports collecting such data under controlled circumstances and as part of a program with a scientifically rigorous study design. These data are critical to evaluating the efficacy of bycatch mitigation efforts, including required bycatch reduction gears and time/area closures in the Atlantic pelagic longline fishery. As such, NMFS is actively considering under what circumstances and how best to conduct scientific research that is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of current bycatch reduction measures.

This notice is a courtesy to fishery participants. Official notice of Federal fishery actions is made through filing such notice with the Office of the Federal Register. For additional information, please contact Russell Dunn at 727-824-5399, or Chris Rilling at 301-713-2347.

for Emily Menachies
for Alan Risenhoover
Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries

8/9/2007
Date

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